

What Makes Our Community Special? (Sample Lesson for Grades 3-12)

Duration: Several 45 to 60 minute sessions

Learning Goals

- ✓ Work together collaboratively on a learning activity, using multiple technology tools
- ✓ Gain or enhance technology skills that can be used to communicate with an outside audience
- ✓ Integrate several academic areas, such as math, literacy, history, and art, into a multidisciplinary unit

Materials/Technology Needed

- ✓ Instructions and student role assignments for each activity station
- ✓ Computers with an Internet connection
- ✓ Computers with graphing software or electronic spreadsheet and presentation applications
- ✓ Digital cameras
- ✓ Technology instruction guides
- ✓ Print resources about the community (from a local library or visitor's bureau)
- ✓ Brainstorming worksheets and pencils for note taking

Preparation

Instructors should determine students' skill level with the Internet, digital cameras, electronic spreadsheets, and electronic publishing or presentation software, and select the appropriate technology tools. Instructors should also be familiar with these tools, or enlist the help of a volunteer who is. Instructors and volunteers should try out the activity ahead of time to make sure they understand the concepts and logistics.

- ✓ Consider the different communities that students might explore. Will it be the classroom, school, neighborhood, city, or other "community"?
- ✓ Organize activity stations and materials based on the available technology and tasks to be completed. Prepare instructions and student role assignments for each station and include these in folders.
- ✓ Develop a rotation schedule and a project timeline for activity stations.
- ✓ Provide a chart defining project expectations so that students will know what to include in their final projects.
- ✓ Assign students to work groups. Be mindful of different age and skill levels.
- ✓ Plan for, reserve, and test all necessary technology throughout all phases of the project.
- ✓ Print a brainstorming worksheet for each student to use during the introductory phase of the activity.
- ✓

Suggested Stations

- ✓ Station 1: "Community Walkthrough"—digital still or video camera (1 per 3 students)
- ✓ Station 2: "Community Culture and History"—print resources and bookmarked Internet resources

- ✓ Station 3: "Community Profile"—online access to the U.S. Census bureau or other data source for data gathering about the community
- ✓ Station 4: "Project Creation"—final project assembly (groups may join to complete this station together)

What to Do

- ✓ Engage students by asking them to define "community" and identify what makes their community unique.
- ✓ Ask students the following questions. Record their answers on the board or have students make notes on their brainstorming worksheets:
 - *What are some notable features, places, landmarks, well-known persons, or popular events?*
 - *What do they like about their community and what they might do to improve their community?*
 - *How might they promote what is special about their community to others?*
Examples include a local newspaper or poster.
 - *What resources might they draw from to help communicate their ideas?* Examples include magazines, newspapers, libraries, historical sources, personal profiles on the Internet, and photographs.

Gather essential information using technology.

- ✓ Explain the workstation setup and the technology at each station. Mention that what they gather from each workstation activity will be used in a final project.
- ✓ Divide students into groups of two or three, and assign one group to each station. If you have more than nine students for the first three stations, arrange for additional materials, computers, and digital cameras at each station.
- ✓ Explain that project teams will rotate through each station over three consecutive sessions to allow for equal use of the different technologies. Adjust schedule as necessary.
- ✓ Be sure to assist students with activities. If necessary, arrange for another adult to be present. Students should be allowed to go outside to take pictures nearby or within the school building.
- ✓ Once students have completed all the workstations, discuss as a group what they learned at each station, what they liked best, and why.

Explain the final project.

- ✓ Each project team can make an electronic poster, presentation, flyer, or newsletter to "publicize" what's special about their community using presentation software, word processing software, or other digital media. Share with students any project requirements you have, such as a minimum number of slides to prepare.
- ✓ Provide additional planning guidelines and solicit final project ideas from the entire group before they return to their project teams and getting started.
- ✓ If a computer is not available for each team, students should plan their slides or documents on paper before creating the final project on the computer.

Have students present their final projects to other students or adults.

Discuss other projects that students could do using the same or other kinds of technology, and either the same or a similar workstation setup.

Outcomes to Look For

- ✓ Student discussion, comments, and final projects that reflect learning and an appreciation of their community
- ✓ When possible, students make connections to multiple content areas, (such as literacy, mathematics, science, and arts)
- ✓ Acquired or enhanced technology skills through use of various technology tools
Collaborative participation and engagement

This lesson was borrowed from the SEDL Afterschool website (<http://www.sedl.org/afterschool>).